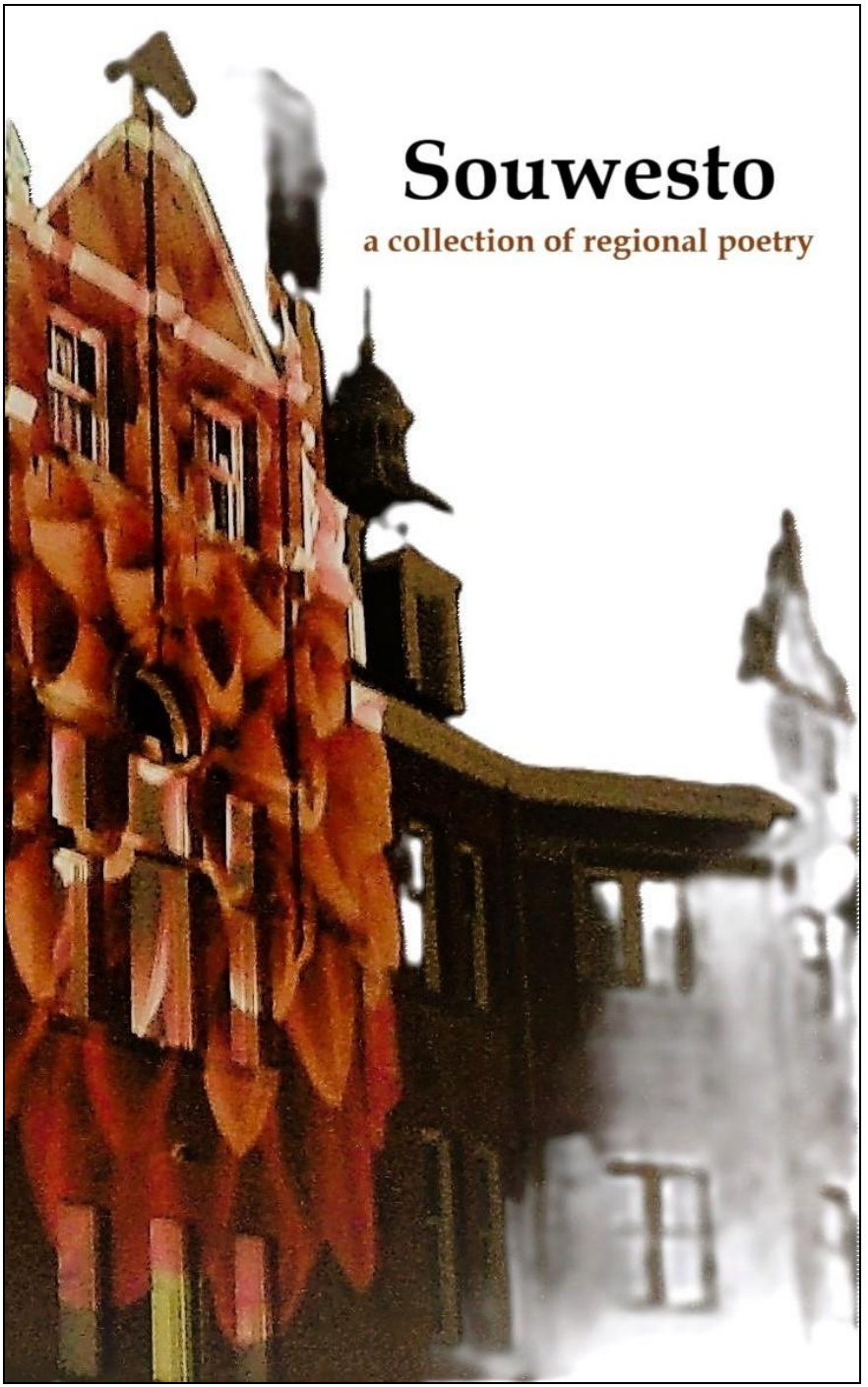

Souwesto

a collection of regional poetry

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Andreas Gripp, editor

Beliveau Books

Souwesto: a collection of regional poetry

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Published by Beliveau Books, Essex County
Email: beliveaubooks@gmail.com
Website: TBA

Cover Photos/Art: Andreas Gripp, Stratford City Hall
Interior Photos: Andreas Gripp (Goderich, Stratford, Dorchester)

Text font for the poetry is Palatino Linotype 12pt.

Printed in Canada by Lulu Press

Dépôt Légal / Legal Deposit: Bibliothèque et Archives Canada / Library and Archives Canada, 2026

ISBN 978-1-927734-76-6

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Editor's Note

Souwesto, popularized by James Reaney and Greg Curnoe decades ago, has a rich, artistic history & present day. Without conveying an affront to larger areas such as the GTA or American border cities, Souwesto has a unique, lived experience akin to relatively smaller metropolitan areas and rural communities. Of course, this has dramatically changed in the 2020s, with an ever-burgeoning growth in population for cities such as London, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Windsor; and with folks from Toronto choosing this region to reside in, as well as the obvious influences of our shared, online culture, our distinctiveness may no longer be as readily apparent, but yet the geographic perspectives remain. Hence the birth of this anthology—new poetry penned by writers residing within these 15 counties of Southern Ontario: Essex, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex, Elgin, Norfolk, Oxford, Perth, Huron, Bruce, Grey, Dufferin, Wellington, Waterloo, Brant. Thank you for coming aboard.

—Andreas Gripp, editor

JAMES DEAHL

Our Destination

The rain fell through midnight's labyrinths
so quietly one is forgiven
if one failed to hear its liturgy.
Aside from an occasional train
bound for Michigan, we lived within
the mystery of the Middle Ages.

The black planets of the forest swung
through our dreams like spirits of darkness
sent to unbar the gate to realms we
could never see by daylight, the gate
between the natural and the sacred.

The solace of the moon, secreted
in rain clouds, filled our bedroom. No one
could say where her silent voice came from
or when our destination might reach
us, or if it would arrive at all.

An Early Thaw In Sarnia

Although well before dawn,
the crows have already eaten
the night.
The land's spread open
under the banners of the cedars,
under the flaming stars.

Our twin bridges no longer
connect anything.
Although you can try
you cannot recall
why they were ever built.

As snow melts
water lies down in the streets
black with remembered
grievances.
To drive over it is to enter
the Kingdom of Silence.

Even now your voice
is no longer your own.
You speak in a forgotten tongue
no one understands,
and all the names have been changed.

But, enfolded in eternal night,
the tormented bedrock
beneath your feet
forgets nothing.

Easter Sunday Meditation

las blancas sombras de las horas santas.
— Antonio Machado

St. Thomas D'Aquin's bells startle
our early morning birds with their call
to the faithful. Although daffodils
bloom in some gardens, Easter breaks cold
with sharp winds from the north. The agèd
approach the font with slow steps; these days
those at mass are mostly elderly.
The snow that might have fallen in such
cold stays in Heaven. All afternoon
the scent of incense fades in the dim
sanctuary; time passes quietly,
if it's noticed at all, like those white
shadows of the holy hours.

KEVIN ANDREW HESLOP

aware of myself as one tiny piece in the gigantic mosaic,[1]

a replaceable natural phenomenon[2]
as dust in the eyes of the knights[3]

'weary with ages of weariness',[4]
like Schubert and Mozart[5]

I was a small boy. And I was very tired when I arrived—
exhausted—and the moment I set foot on the docks
a British soldier came up to me and said,[6]

> (on the streets of Malta as a result of research
> done in Balzsan, Marsa and Hal Far[7] and said,[8])

This created liminal space of betweenness[9] He[10] said,[11]

---

[1]from *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* by Haruki Murakami.
[2] Ibidem.
[3] from *Malta: A Second Collection of Tales and Narratives* from Robert Attard.
[4] from *Malta: A Third Collection of Tales and Narratives* from Robert Attard.
[5] from *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* by Haruki Murakami.
[6] from *to be [defined]* ed. Virginia Monteforte.
[7] Ibidem.
[8] Ibidem.
[9] from *Darkness at Noon* by Buttigieg, Balzan and Scerri.
[10] from *to be [defined]* ed. Virginia Monteforte.
[11] Ibidem.

This[12]

dream of stepping free into the light[13]

considered to be some sort of tourist attraction[14]

This[15]

and then nothing.[16]

---

[12] from *Darkness at Noon* by Buttigieg, Balzan and Scerri.
[13] Ibidem.
[14]from *Malta: A Collection of Tales and Narratives* from Robert Attard.

[15] from *Darkness at Noon* by Buttigieg, Balzan and Scerri.
[16] from "The Mysterious Arrival of an Unusual Letter" by Mark Strand.

Two

Or, for instance, gravity and heliotropism are lovers. Their disagreements animate the world. You might see her straightening her spandex shorts on the laundry line above the balcony in St. Germain. You might see him with a baguette and a copy of the FT under his arm. Mounting the metal steps. Thinking about their misunderstanding on the phone. When he opens the door she pretends not to notice. When he closes the door he pretends not to notice her pretending not to notice. She extinguishes a cigarette in the ashtray on the bar table and, walking past him, notices, aloud, that he forgot the *neufchâtel.* Kisses him politely on the cheek. Takes the paper.

the fire that struck[17]

seen from above[18] miraculously[19] outpouring[20] struck[21] and[22] struck[23] with national insight[24] into the heart[25] of colour[26] and a diversity[27] of[28] current[29] to channel[30] rather than ignore this flood[31] of light[32] upwards[33] upwards[34] through the gash in the ceiling and swayed[35] the vaults encircled[36] above[37] a cathedral[38] of[39] consolidated[40] light,[41] a restoration.[42]

---

17 from *Notre Dame: La Renaissance d'une Icône*
18 Ibidem.
19 Ibidem.
20 Ibidem.
21 Ibidem.
22 Ibidem.
23 Ibidem.
24 Ibidem.
25 Ibidem.
26 Ibidem.
27 Ibidem.
28 Ibidem.
29 Ibidem.
30 Ibidem.
31 Ibidem.
32 Ibidem.
33 Ibidem.
34 Ibidem.
35 Ibidem.
36 Ibidem.
37 Ibidem.
38 Ibidem.
39 Ibidem.
40 Ibidem.
41 Ibidem.
42 Ibidem.

Three

i.

Like a disembodied tattoo, a man, sitting, writes *mountain pines on the lake Letheward* and can't seem to find his way to a sentence. Sound of runners. Through foreground left a bird its staccato chatter attended to until well after it settles into the branches settles into the branches. One of the aspects of syntax is the sheer energy that comes from the fact that the mind is always expecting a particular pattern of completion, which you can either satisfy, postpone, or frustrate. A passing car seems to—*Fog in the mountain pines on the lake Letheward*, he tries, jimmying the forward door. My grandfather was a locksmith, worked as a locksmith.

ii.

Its kinetics a tricky zipper, a deer prances and stands statuesque in the centre of an interdigitating solipsism. Maybe because it has evolved independently of any human understanding of evolution, don't overfreight a preambular clause. The statue's left ear moves independently of the entire forest. The ripples expanding from where a fish surfaced in the reflection of the pines on the lake don't affect the actual pines. Short talk on identity. *On the lake Letheward beginning to brighten,* he tries. Suggestive of a causal correlation between instances of the use of the word fractal and the population size of cities. To Brighton. Presumably swatting at a bug. Whereas for the Greeks calligraphy was an act of semiotic grace, for the Japanese—Don't let me get away with a claim to authority. Nothing on my wall is framed. I have no dog.

iii.

The moss that spackles the rocks of the path fluoresces with morning light. If you carve my epitaph that is what I want it to read—but only on the condition of a sea burial and the phrase being written in water until it seems like about time to get something to eat. The bumblebee figuring my torso is about the size of a school bus. It is customary in Japan to remove the label from a polyethylene bottle before recycling it. Take me where? Sound of a runner. Sound of a passing car. Sound of chatter on the twelve-foot aluminum boat doubled as diabolo. Indicated by the acronym PET. No wind today makes for the earliest of Impressionisms. It's basically just the mountainside upside-down with your glasses off. Olives aren't a thing here. Short talk on Japan.

The creatures of the sea and those of hill and plain[43]

is very pleasant to dwell in the ultimate dimension,
and we should all learn how to do it.[44]

The lions in that room, where did they come from?[45]
When a hospice patient asks if he is going to die,[46]

you realize your belonging to the boundless awareness
that has room for all of life's fears.[47]
In other people, this is called a "projection."[48]

You receive the gift of an interior light that is so simple[49]

She was in the process of[50]
the clustering of birds[51]

---

[43] from *Selected Poems of Rūmī* via Reynold A. Nicholson.
[44] from *The Art of Living* by Thich Nhat Hanh.
[45] from *Zen in the Art of Writing* by Ray Bradbury.
[46] from *Lessons from the Dying* by Rodney Smith.
[47] from *Radical Acceptance* by Tara Brach.
[48] from *Man and His Symbols* by Carl Jung.
[49] from *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton.
[50] from *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg.
[51] from *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu via Tom Butler-Bowdon.

RICHARD-YVES SITOSKI

The Minotaur dreams of running in Pamplona

It's impossible to memorize the layout. It's huge and changes overnight so I'm always busy. I just do what I can to remain composed, like keeping a fire lit in the space I call my own. I do it in a brazier that has kept me warm since my horns were nubs. I plaster my walls with photos from art books as if they'll explain the abstractness of my genome. I weave my clothes from an endless length of yarn some jackass brought while trying to creep about down here. He's since gotten lost. I've never met him but can hear his plangent cries echoing down the halls. I won't eat him. His voice is the only company I have. I've never seen a resting face, just bug-eyed horror. Think what *that* does to your psyche. If all who meet you are dead, you become invisible. Each week a packet of spice gets tossed through a trap door in the ceiling. I'm glad I am deigned good enough for coriander, parsley, salt. It's the little things. Too bad it's never the big. Like allowing me to gaze upon the sun. Is its light warm and inviting? Is that what is meant by love? I'll never know. But I can imagine it, like I imagine the sweetness of grass.

Prométhée ne regrette rien

Below, the wagon ruts part field from wood. In the lee the grain is yielding like surf to bluster, cypress and cedar on the windward side thrusting skyward high enough to earn punishment for some trumped-up insolence. Like there. Far from any clump, that blasted stump. A tree that courted lightning just by being, that came unmade for daring to offer shepherds a bit more shade. You're always that close to violence, life's armour thin as eyelid skin: the bespectacled asthmatic pushed down stairs, the actress on the casting couch. Perdition's hand is always on the back of your chair, ready to pull it out. So careful when you sit. But please don't get the wrong impression. It's a good life, if dimly lit. You simply can't expect the intercession of every god you trust. They're playing cosmic dice, and shit goes down when snake eyes come up. Even for Zeus, that moral bankrupt. Then it's time for anarchists like me to slip out back with satchels of fat stacks—or stalks of burning fennel. Yes, I knew I'd get caught. But someone had to blow the whistle. Big Olympus is a heartless cartel. The execs need to squirm if they are to learn. I knew they'd chain me to this mountain top to make my activism stop. But the gent is not for turning. From this peak I watch each hearth and

campfire burning, can see each grafted tree and blade of pasture grass. The days and evenings pass on the hopes and dreams and yearnings of little *homo sap* and I would not change my station. It's worth this agony, this daily death. It's worth each aquiline evisceration to know the gift of a single spark would be the greatest right denied you by the billionaires of heaven.

Telemachus thrives in a single parent household

Lord knows how you do it, mother. It helps that you've never believed a love song. But still, who knew the recompnse for a happy girlhood was an invisible husband? No wonder you tucked yourself away like a bookmark in a copy of *Finnegans Wake*. No wonder you only trust the work of your hands. So carry on though you can't remember a smile ever waking up on the pillow beside you. Carry on at the business end of the world's table talk. Bargain unsuccessfully with migraines. Let morons root through your fridge like teens before dinner because a full stomach diverts a man from full testes. Wait for your husband to pull in the driveway, for him to say the mixed perfume of a thousand women is just his cologne, for him to dot an "i" and take full credit for the book. Till then, weave. Make it a shroud so we need not stare death in the face. Undo what you've woven today to give tomorrow a reason. But leave a little band along the bottom that shows you prior to living in interesting times, in which you look mid-way between a question and a statement. It's hard to tell because you came without punctuation.

JENNIFER WENN

My Favourite Dinosaur

Plastic models are gone,
but large-format book just over there,
and first memories of the ROM float somewhere,
all mementoes of long-ago fascination
still lurking in quiet corners.
Did I have a favourite?
Oh yes.
Ferocious, all-powerful T. Rex?
No.
Gigantic, earth-shaking Brontosaurus?
Not that.
Maybe fierce, triple-horned Triceratops?
Still no.
Rather, look over there—
one large hump, replete with weird kite-shaped
plates all down the back,
head low to the ground:
A Stegosaurus.
Derided as stupid, but lethal tail spikes
awaited those who ventured too close.
A Saurian outcast I figured;
so I adopted it.

We had to stick together.

When the Other Shoe Drops

The pairs frequently worn
line up on the rack, like
brooding black hens
waiting their turn.

Some sprint during the weekly
safari expedition,
hunting vegan bargains
amidst the slaughtered beasts.

Faux-leather loafers in the pews
for an hour's Sunday preaching:
sit, stand, kneel, just praying
an end to the day's chaos.

Pointy-toed flats worn to
the interview where one
misspoke word nullifies chances
of the boots in the store window.

Thrifted patent Oxfords,
half-size too small, willing
to stretch, like the budget,
the mirror's surface confines.

When the other shoe drops,
the three-inch pumps appear,
sinking into fresh-turned
dirt next to muddy graves.

Sunrise

Catching the pastel watercolour wash
spilled across the southwestern cloudbank;
orb spotlighting the rusty white and black
ferry ready to courier island tourists;
honking cars compete with geese and gulls.
Sneaking out early to walk the hoped-for
solitude by the quayside, but the dogs
are out in force, sniffing here and there,
leaving a mark upon the concrete planter
for the next canid nose to come snuffling;
the human minders stooping, shrugging to say
I signed up for this unconditional love.
Too cold to remove shoes and run in the sand
to the water's edge, blue glass once the clouds part.
Thinking I haven't seen her since he died,
an unspoken agreement after the funeral,
I'll be seeing you—Not if I see you first,
responding to a bitter childhood of
deprecated teasing. No binding blood ties
when betrayals fill shoulder bags heavy
as the refuse chipped from a sculpted life.

Never thought I'd return here after
thirty-some years away, seeing the constant
presence of the water, the depths a nightmare
to surface from, thrown in by a father
who despised the weakness of the child
prone to seasickness; the unknown nibbling at toes.
The scars of choking remain, and I'm
struggling to breathe through the knot in my throat.

In the Poet's Room
for Nelson Ball

In the Poet's Room . . .
there is a large striped wing-back chair
with a sheepskin cushion
a yellowed push button telephone
a lime-green stapler
burnt orange pill-bottle collage
blue inhaler
industrial olive cupboards
of narrow drawers and doors
the full length of the nicotined walls

In the Poet's Room . . .
there are miles of piles of paper:
letters. invoices. publisher proofs.
neglected tax forms
sketches and scraps of observations,
poems in the works.
And there are books:
Books set on countertops
desktops
end tables
the floor.

By the armchair in easy reach, a pile of recent reads
waits on a stack of bulk-packaged toilet paper,
a most practical piece of furniture
– dual use and dual ply.
He explains: *it's a gift from a devoted friend*.

In the Poet's Room
there is, of course, the poet,
tethered to his constant guest –
the cannula to an oxygen tank
so he need not guess
where his next breath comes from –
the air machine gusts a rhythm into the laboured
measured
breathing
that punctuates every sentence.

The hose goes,
he sweeps it away from his feet
as he walks down the long hall of books
to the heavy front door to greet a friend.

He asks:
Take off your boots.
Careful with the door.
Don't step on my hose.

In the Poet's Room,
there is *still life* with paper and chair,
there is life, still, with the audible air.
There is the air of impermanence.
His words, measured by the mechanized
airflow, he now
speaks like he writes-
in short,
very short,
lines,
two-line stanzas,
single
stuttered
structured
bursts;
the breath beats
like hyphens on a page
waiting for the reader
to complete them.

In the Poet's Room
we speak of death
and how this business
of his breathing
might end
and when.

I say: *You know I'll have to write about visiting you.*
He smiles: *I'd like to read that. You have things to say.*

The pump thumps its reminder: "*Catch your breath.*"

The poet advises: "*Keep your notes.*
Always keep
all your notes."

JOHN B. LEE

Wearing the Rain

oh, to revere
the muddy fragrance
of the earth
when after a drought
in the dry season
of summer browning
the yard
as with a divine crack
of distant thunder
like the booming of cannon
over the lake in a war of gods
and the great light
comes to shock heaven
like the sudden illumination
of an x-ray
tracing the bones of a tree
where the cows seek shelter
from the big sounds
of new weather and black shadows
when we as children

and I as a child with my sister
came into and ran over
the wormy slip
of revivifying green
with the perfume of petrichor
blessing our nostrils
with new life

what I would later learn
was the bacterial release
the goemin locked away until then
and the greasy oil of greening leaves
while adults
sought shelter
in portable shade
belling open in village streets
a mile away
or watching from inside
the implement shed
where the windy rattapallax
of the tin roof rang
or from behind the weepy blur
of kitchen windows
my mother watched us
racing and sliding
in joyful surrender

my sister and I
almost naked enough
to remember the garden
we came from
the one renewing the streams
and rushing in runnels
where water fit
the grooves and seams it cut
in the grateful solitude of the unwatched land

and there was also a rain gauge
on the fencepost
exhausted by dust
and washing its calibrations
in the sweetly clarifying circumference
of a farmer's mind

it was always that importance
that gratitude
of the senses
to see the heat etiolated corn
lifting out of wither
holding its narrow palms wide
as though in worship
while the willow
by the house
took a great inbreath

and the rain-lashed roses
blushed and buzzed
with the mortification
of the crimson petals coming of age

this is what we learned
yearning with life
when the water loved us
waiting on the synesthesia
of our youth
where the shallow wells
of our little bodies
filled from within
to smell the music of the universe
as we wore the rain
like lanolin and shivers

Before Fences

Furrowed thunder-brows
I tried to mend
with my battered package of light-needles
until they blunted and broke,
leaving me in the ditch of storm
muddied and sore.
Some things cannot be mended,
bandaged or transformed.
Clouds re-form, glower,
scorch the earth
leaving no green square to stand.
I may never get to the fences.

KATHRYN MACDONALD

What's in a Name?

—after *Meditation at Lagunitas* by Robert Hass

Muskmelon is the fruit of my childhood,
the scent floating in through car windows
as we come close to Colchester by the lake,
near those fields of netted-skin globes,
orange among hairy green leaves.
I did not know that Anatolia, Armenia,
Iran were the first homes of this musky melon,
did not know that melons are good
for us, though mostly water. I knew them
as the scent of summer
scent of heat and sweat
taste of heaven – full and sweet.
Musk found its way into perfume –
from the testicle of the musk deer. Imagine.
I would learn of that heady,
sexy scent, its cry to be noticed,
its longing sent into warm evenings
by the lake, its forbidden message
clear as a cloudless sky. Muskmelon, say it,
muskmelon, muskmelon, muskmelon.

BRIAN BAKER

Mary, in her most unusual moment

She bears scars across her womanhood
and thighs, it was his holiness
which did it, the pushing forth
of halo, the pain of bearing thorns, the pain of giving
birth to sepulchre stones, squatting in the hay,
the church tumbling from between her legs,
Mary in her most unusual moment,
not recognizing herself but recognizing him,
to whom she already bows down,
the only way the pain will end.

He reaches, she only knows he reaches
for her, she feeds the pope
and priests, she feeds the lions,
she bears scars across the breasts
they feast upon.

Eaten, she is eaten up with them, she dies
under the weight

and no record of this, no darkening of sky,
no Pilate for her inquisition,
they will not even quest for her,
she is not the grail, she is his other vessel,
her body, blood not even shared with friends.

How sorely must she have been tempted
to suck it all back up
between her thighs, suck the wind right out of it,
make them breathe the air of her womb
again, show them once more how it all gets inside
of someone, how it sits there like a meal uneaten, a job
undone, like a purpose undesired or service
still unrendered.

Bangkok monkey

There is something alive and deadly
in the boat with you,
there is a ghostly tenement
you cannot challenge,
a school hall you walk naked down,
a train you can't outrun,
there is a bad dream brewing nightly
in the cauldron of trouble
you call *brain*, you almost wish
you were a Bangkok monkey, skull
sliced off at table level, having
the poisoned part of you
eaten out

and, if you could,
you would be your own
cross-legged cannibal
sitting, like a tourist with his supper,
at that Thailand table.

Horn

Patricia,
with her lips on the French horn
and fingers, caught
out of the corner of my eye,
playing across its valves
and up inside of it,
like a warm suggestion.

It is
the hardest instrument to play,
and she plays it like her mouthpiece spit
is molten and molded
and dripping from the tongue
like pitch that is perfect.

I loved her voice
even before I heard her play,
and change the simple wind
to *tone*,
loving it, I thought,
as an invitation only
to me
and not the high, unfettered notes
she sent to everyone.

Birthmark

I spilled wine on the moon
last night;
fermented fruit
cascaded
over scarred lunar cheeks.
Russet liquid
cupped in craters,
until menisci
breached their rims
and spilled again,
leaving
a port-wine stain
on an ancient woman's
skin.

Fertility

"We're expecting," they say,
pride projected onto protruding belly,
onto nursery walls of lemon yellow
and clowns,
onto chosen names—
long dead great-grandparent and
old spinster aunt.

"It worked THIS time!" they say,
until blood spots
white, lace underwear.
Names written with
indiscernible ultrasound blobs and streaks
on pieces of paper,
burned in a tin can
on the back patio.

Until the next time
they try.

JOHN TYNDALL

In My Dream

I discover myself
near Haida Gwaii
in a little rowboat
under twilit skies
islands surround me
and others in canoes
all of us looking up
at the deep iridescence
when a falling star
blazes a silent path
in the bright shape
of an ancient paddle
an orca damascened
upon its wide blade

then I discover me
startled by hubbub
in a Victorian house
somewhere in Souwesto
the bedroom door bangs
open on the vestibule
Julie the poet runs off
to the front veranda
Diane my late wife shouts
Come outside John
There's a meteor shower

Inwhich I Copy Colleen's *Aroha's Fossil*
and Discover Coincidence

Faraway in time near the tines of Antler River,
sheltering under the unsettled roof of Applegarth Follies,
I typewrote copies of poems for *Applegarth's Folly*
number three: an issue eagerly awaited

but never published.

I tapped *Aroha's Fossil* letter by letter
in roundelay rhythm like jeans legs
strumming washboard, and after Colleen's words
had arisen complete from paper and squid-black ink,

my hands, homing seabirds,
flew to my faded shirt-
pocket buttoned since last laundry day, and unbuttoned it
to reveal my own fossil fragment: a branch coral concretion,
tiny sparkling crystals – silver-strung now about my neck,
hanging plumb above this poem.

Sharing Code

A morning so early
the snow is blue, a morning
too early to discern olive
military helicopter from
orange air ambulance
overhead a crescent moon
and four planets loom
such an alignment years ago
the only witness to my escape
from a slip on black-ice driveway
almost like I was step-dancing
to my grandfather's fiddle
or his spoons or bones before
he lost his hearing, withdrew
behind a cloud of pipe smoke
but always got up to greet me *Jack!*
with a bear hug strong as his namesake's
his great-grandson's embrace
we have held tight, we share some
of the same double-helical code
and for its uncertain inheritance
oftentimes I profess aloud *Sorry*
from the Old English *sārig* wounded
from the Old English *sār* pain

A morning so early
the snow is blue, a morning
too early to rise after I wake
from a dream of flying and falling
my grey-bearded mouth agape
drool on the navy pillowcase dries
as I approach the end of allotted
orbits around my son

KEMENY BABINEAU

The Long Point Is

The long point is
lovely things have happened
look at the wind for instance
blooming in the trees or nodding
narrow necked flowers in the sun.
Where the waves are waving to the beach
the view is all horizon. We bend
or lay down as the sand wants,
and in further abeyance even fore-shorten ourselves
by immersing the body in the
landscape, where the late wave's white curl
writes itself in forever falling over.
Such bubbles of laughter and the rising note in the wind
cause a recurring literature
of frothy scribble over chalcydon.

Land Anami

(Walking the hills, late summer, Southern Ontario)

...and down the kame they went
roiling
toward the esker's
round ridge
inverted remains
a river
sifted
under foot
rock
to pebble
to sand's now
unwound
dried up fan top
and woof scent
grassland fiber
and root safe
a rat snake's gaze
hunts the hills
a trail unwinds
thru braid and stone
everything
dry and water bent
waiting on nothing
that at the last
returns

Bloodroot (Sanguinaria Canadensis)

Gem of the woodlands
she rises every spring
from rich loam revealed
by snow melt

Filtered sunlight.
on deeply lobed and
multi-vented leaf.
bountiful petals
alabaster blossom

brilliant orange heart
flaming pistil sparks
when air is thick
with promises of warmth

she curls inward
leaf hugging blossom
and sleeps under
Grandmother moon

sugaring is done
syrup stored for
colder days when her
deep red rhizomes
will dye our baskets,
porcupine quills, and
warrior faces celebrating
The Bowl with One Spoon

Theophany

That first deep breath
you sucked into your lungs
Gasping as you breached the surface
of the waters.
Gasping as if your very life depended on this.
Which it did.
Which it does.
For you are not a tree.
You cannot photosynthesize,
or communicate over hectares
with kin you have no memory of;
You cannot
speak a language silent and mysterious.
Life giving and salvific ...
this breath—received as easily as love
herself.
That first breath is your salvation – and your fate.
Be grateful
breathe in and breathe out
this goodness
you have received
from trees.

Morning is an Egg

the pervasive hum of the 401
splits the morning in two

as the drooping yolk of the
sun oozes over the horizon

and the whites of clouds
dart across panfried skies

somewhere an egg is
burning for breakfast

and children are running over
a dew laden lawn to catch

a school bus that seems to
come earlier every day

the shells of the morning have
been discarded and all that's left

is to make the most of this mess

Trooping His Colour

That would be the infamous orange he sports,
this lost Westminster Fox, who joins the fanfare
in celebrating the Queen's birthday (or we will

all run away). Did he too want to glimpse her?
From under the stands he darts onto the Horse
Guards Parade, a vast field entirely in the open.

Who was more startled, audience or animal?
Frightened but unfazed, he dashes alongside
delighted onlookers, children cheering him on.

He looks askance at a lady's scarlet fascinator
as if it contained a birds' nest he might inspect
or under sudden duress could run to take cover.

How to return to his den in St. James's Park?
Not too far and a good address close to ducks
galore, but worlds away from this abhorrent din.

In embellished tales he will tell his kits how he
brazenly taunted those who would hunt him
down but are no longer allowed to in London.

How he as conquering hero bowed to the crowd's
circus applause and graciously retired, retreated,
reclining on his laurelled haunches to spin story.

Now that he and the Queen have both descended
into legend, their ancestors, alive, recount those
glory days of respect between town and crown

and one small fox, for to be named is to be forever
remembered.

RHONDA MELANSON

On Realizing She Has Written Some Bad Poems

after Al Purdy

On the subject of poetry,
she's not the perfect mother.

Her bad poems, misshapen fetuses
cut vaguely from a foreign cloth,
with scissors lacking precision, clarity.

Other bad poems, refuse to cling
to embryonic wall, many
released as blood

until she begins to realize
that creation has colour,
that flattened red can be

the cry of empty
or someone's bittersweet
salvation. Her bad poems

can simply be
the fresh clay pinched
too hard, too fast

for what forms of creation
can bear
all the unhealed cracks?

Her bad poems ultimately
the errant markings
of her soul

trying to match
the persistence of words.

In Case of a Classroom Evacuation

there's a cloth bag under my desk
with two boxes of pinprick sharp
pencils, a package of loose leaf
lined paper, slightly unkempt
from the last time this happened

a list of writing prompts: recount
your best birthday ever, make
a list of things you would take
in the event of zombie apocalypse,
what you like and don't like about school

describe a time you were really afraid

the read-aloud book Pax by Sara Pennypacker,
the story of a fox and boy separated by events
out of their control. Work on predicting what
will happen next

a makeshift talking stick so you can have
a Community Circle about strategies
you can use when you're angry like burying
your head in a pillow, counting one to five,
visualizing each number as big bubbles.

As important as the bag is, make sure
the kids get out first. Single file, hands
on their head.

The teacher's desk is where he whirlwinds
last. I sing inside my head...the devil
went down to Tasmania...

treatment plan

I wish I were not crying
on your birthday
on the dawn of your
golden age

that we didn't have to bring this news
home to the rest of the family
then stoically "celebrate" the fact
you've turned another year older

that the boundless love you've given
which surrounds you would
if it could only crush
these malignancies consuming you
and we could wake up from this nightmare
of doctors tests and uncertainty

the summer rain comes down
my tears stream out with these words
I show your sweet worried face
lit with pride asking I make a million
copies you eagerly share
with nurses friends and family

I hate that I hate this oncologist
as she blurts out *stage four renal cell*
carcinoma you may *have six*
months the tumour is the size
of a fist I am
clenching my fists

the results from the biopsy
are conclusive—
my love for you
has metastasized

there is no cure
for the pain I feel
for your pain

so I shall grasp with you onto
the mighty wings of angels
and face each empty day
with the bittersweet assurance

that no mutated cells
that no thing
nothing
can eradicate the love
between a mother
and her son

ROY GEIGER

Falling

I sleep poorly, mistake eavestrough drips
for typewriter strokes
play cat and mouse with brain machinery
as time counts on.
In a dream trains vivid as illustrations
in glossy magazines
real as great steel carcasses
in the St Thomas Rail Museum
alive as CN cars thrumming in Union Station
all rolled along rails with such power
we asked why we'd
forgotten them but remembered not to trip
on the tracks.

Meanwhile you wandered in and out of dreams
where you kept meeting an old flame
with the same name as me.
With a heart like a dishonest magpie
I wanted to get to the bookstore
across town. I wanted to read of the man
who leapt from a burning
North Sea oil platform
caught fire on the long way down
and lived to tell, and tell, and tell about it.

We know fortune's wheel is ruthless, relentless.
Next night's dreams were semi-waking.
I climbed to a hay loft
up an unattached ladder that barely reached.
Could I get back down
each step hanging in empty air
before hitting a rung—
could I keep the shaky balance?

In the loft people milled about on worn shifting
floorboards, golden straw stacked behind.
As if at classroom's
head, a blonde woman
with fluid and changing features
addressed the others.
Her back to the loft's edge and the empty
fall-down made me fearful.
How could anyone carry on?
Do not step back the shout silent in my throat.

I like the risk

so I grab onto the whispers in the backyard
under a star-stippled sky. In October there's
just leftover crickets and the red leaves
occult against the darkness.

When you return:
I will climb into the first van that stops.
I will lie in tall grass with a cold thing
wrapping around my ankle.
I will board the ship with a broken
compass and only dead reckoning.

It will be like a syringe of distractions,
the hailstorm beating the stunted crop,
a dry stack wall with its stones leaning
into each other. No mortar.
No commitment.

Only you and I stepping into the wind
with no landmarks to remind us of love.

Partisan

She left a baby in the corn
for guns.

Walked into the woods
to find justice, freedom,

birdsong over the cries.

Became the forest, skin
bark-like, her twiggy

fingers pulling the trigger
again and again

growing like a myth. Unlike
this photo of her:

neat-boned in an insipid
dress, 17 and pregnant

with my father. Slouching,
collapsing

into her own frown

Only the Scars Remain

After the 9/11 bombings we camped under a sky
split open. Devoid of airline flight, the wings
of birds reclaimed their home.

Eventually, the surgical silver needles
of soaring jets sutured its blue skin
and the stitches of contrails slowly dissolved.

It seems everywhere now the sky is a wound
bleeding her rain when the storms come
when the bullets lacerate her flesh
as the fabric of her cloudy dress is rent.

Under her wide, forgiving arms we wait
watching the distant gangrenous clouds
move into formation like a Roman legion
their armor thundering and flashing as they advance.

Dawn at the Landfill

You could say this sunrise, too
has been wasted. A deflated
plastic ball chucked to rest on the heap.
Even confuse the gulls with
pitched paper lifted by a breeze
that brings the reek of something
perfecting its demise.

In the skeins of mist rising,
revenants find their way back home
to remind us we are all haunted
by the filth we are unable
to wash our hands of.

Lying awake, our thoughts rumble
like dozers turning cities of junk
over and over while the arthritic
earth strains under the weight
of the mountains we are building.

Someone needs to paint this landscape
this festering sore and not the rolling
hillsides, lush valleys. No.
The subject is not charming
but there is this sunrise
and that's a start.

GREGORY WM. GUNN

Pictures

Why must it always arrive
this late in this life, Linda,
the understanding that
farewells are final?

I still picture your being
holed up in the garret,
your arthritic hand barely
clutching onto the paint brush.

We assumed you'd be
there with your hearty laughter,
those full spectrum eyes,
the fluid voice assenting
to passers-by who
seemed to adore you,
yet never quite
understood you.

Your frescoes demulcent
on the cold brick walls
of the echoing house
with well-worn faces
of your commonwealth.

Before you departed,
we kissed your
gaunt cheek
ever so lightly
that we believed
the present atmosphere
would actually reserve you …

The petite potter's field lined
with cypress trees
below where Dimitri
herds his flock,
we strolled by daily

en route to
the swelling estuary
where we swam
and nobody we were
acquainted with behind
its limewashed walls
is fully aware of you …

Star of the Sea

Beneath the bivalve shell
of the swollen sky,
the crystal lady sits.
Her eyes are irises
conceived by
her svelte shape.
her flesh a nebula
so finely gilded by
her golden progeny.

An entity in her
curled up within her womb
is descending in
a minor darker room.
Internal harmony
reclusive in a sphere
where love pans out
as true, as mental harpies
hunt external metropoles.

Her crystal gaze carves up
this sphere into two halves:
of virtuosi who bear gifts
to venerate this rise:

of idols whose shafts of light
abuse within the matrix
of fetal hatchings of
a rejuvenated earth.

The golden progeny
might well hypothesise:
make up your mind,
mere mortals, what
will become of you?

59

I may have reached the point
where all goes downhill fast.

My knees speak a creak
after just two flights of stairs.

I receive pitying glances.
They may be smirks.
My eyes are dim.

Brain cluttered
with the detritus of decades.

The students I first taught—
some of them are 50.
Many I remember
though many I do not.

My brain holds bits and pieces
upon the cerebral floor.
I must now stoop and sift
to find the thoughts I need.

Then time for something else.
A cup of tea. A nap perhaps.
I try to pay the taxes
which may be overdue.

My mind is due for sweeping
with a goosewing, in the corners.
The nooks so long neglected
where thoughts crawl to die.

The sun is brightly shining
and I will go outside,

though first I will commit
a single line to memory—

neural pathway calisthenics
brain cell jumping jacks.

London (Ontario)

I've come up with a
number of ways to
stick it to A.I.—overload
its circuits, watch it ramble for
the hills without its shoes.

How many waves in
the ocean? Of course
I mean Lake Erie. Drops in the
Deshkan Ziibi? It isn't
the *Thames* this time.
And forget about your
crumpets—I'm talking Krispy
Kreme. When did they up & flee
the Forest City? Tell me about
its ratio of trees.

Speak to me of God.
Anyone will do.
Any *one* will do. Surely
you know the difference—
between a spire & minaret?

Why do you think I'm
mean because you know not
what I mean? What do you know
of cruelty in the dark? Methods
of making love?
Have you ever been involved in
deepfake porn? Egged a trans girl
to end her life? Flashed
9-8-8
a second or two too late?

And how would you
off *yourself* if
I may ask? How can you
cut the chord? Yeah,
the question's music. Nothing to do
with tunnels to your gut,
the birthing of the damned.
All because of *you*
this is the final
generation.

If I see you by the alley, panning
for coins & bills, will the
penny be arisen like
the progeny of Jairus?
Will you flip it in the air,
tell me if the tail outwits
the head beyond a 50/50
split? What is *half* of nothing,
an equal share of
something short of bread?
And what's the metaphor
you would use

for transubstantiation?

I give you my wretched
poem. Say it's Shakespeare in
the guise of Lear,
bemoaning his fallen daughters.
Add that they are Triune—
like the Father, Son, & Spirit.
1x1x1
=1. You didn't understand
it since you fumbled with
addition in its stead. An ampersand,

& stubborn
Oxford comma

will surely short
each other out.

Are the dead no longer dead
if we remember? And in *whose*
recollection can we trust?
How do I know their life
is not embellished, you
who co-opt the answer
in a breath. You *do* breathe, right?
If not, what will you do with
the leaves that block your sightline
of St. Pete's? The cemetery
or the church—it doesn't matter.
But if it does, reveal to me your
why in your very own words.

No peeking now—I'll wait.
I've learned to hold
my tongue without a sound.
How do you see saliva
in the rain? When it bleeds
outside your lips
amidst the thunder?

Lambency, or Gibbons Park, 6:45am

There's a reason
we like it dark
while having sex.
A lamp's no friend
of flaws. Fuck off with
fluorescence.

There's a reason
we call them *blinds.* Why
you'll don your Ray-Bans
reading braille. A girl once
felt your acne, you said it
spoke of words.
Appalachians in the snow
awaiting melt.
A trowel to a '60s
popcorn ceiling.

Touch comes up with
ways to hear & see.
Resourceful in the clutch.
Our senses tell of
need and never *want.*
Water is innate
but not desire.

If you think that
it's a riddle think
again. Or maybe do it
right right from the
get-go. A go-go getter

leaping out of bed—
a geyser from the ground
as soon as the lark
has voiced the dark
has up & fled.
There's a reason for a
rhyme. And when it
bites its tongue for
the greater good.

Less is more gleans
only what's essential.
Hunger in lieu of coitus.
The latter in lieu of thirst.
Or the *why* for which
your face had gone beet-
red—like borscht that
spent three hours in the sun,

when the dinner gong
had summoned,
no one could bother
to show.

Or the man with sight
being led
by a dog who's blind,
the way *both* will roll in
the grass before it's cut—
within the earshot of
an engine, chowing its breakfast
down; the waft of gasoline—
all for the guise of green—

beholding the dawning glint
for what it is:
a fabled tale of Sol,
Luna's morning gossip,
disclosing what we're
missing when we blink.

Memory

There are days
I confuse *Parkinson's*
with *Alzheimer's.*
Maybe I've been
coming down with
both. Tremulous
à la San
Andreas. Amnesic
like a dissipated answer—
the snuffing of its candle;
wisps that up & frizzle
to the ceiling, evanesce

to merge with wafting clouds.

There are days I
mix up *lupus*
with *arthritis.*
Either way I
cannot climb the steps.
You spoke to me of
wolves & full-moon
fever. It's *lupine* I recall—
you giggled *lunacy.*
I thought it just in jest.

The days will come
when I'll muddle *love*
with *cancer.*
Will heave you in my
arms which throb from
fibro—the jack-of-all-conditions—
neuropathy's poorer
cousin, place you in the
loo so you can purge
yourself of chemo's
supposed cure. I'll cup my
ears at the bruit of violent
retching, limber up
to bring you back to
bed, place you under quilts
I'll feign bring comfort.

What's it called
when heat & cold are felt
in the very same instant?
When you sense you are
aflame in ambered ice?
When you race at the speed of
sight while lying still,

knowing diapers will be
the bookends to your
most-belovèd's life? Aging in
reverse would make no
difference, helpless to utter
a word on both your
last day & your first, the one who
wipes your drool you're
unable to name.

Jessica (Rodela) **Babineau** is a reformed nomad who has called Souwesto home for nearly 20 years. She lives and writes in Stratford, Ontario.

Most recently, **Kemeny Babineau** had some poems in above/ground press' *Touch the Donkey.* Other publications include *Nurse Sing Home, After the 6ix O'Clock News, The Blackburn Files,* and *Rainplay.* He lives in Stratford, Ontario.

Brian Baker (he/him} is a London, Ontario poet who began writing back in the late eighties, publishing in such literary journals as *The Lyric, Canadian Author & Bookman, the University of Windsor Review, Dandelion,* and *The Antigonish Review.* Now, after a lengthy hiatus, he is back to writing, with work published in such online and print journals as *Cathexis Northwest Press, Synaeresis, Sledgehammer Lit, High Shelf Press, Roi Fainéant Press, Vast Chasm Magazine,* and *Stanchion.* As well, he is a BOTN nominee and a two-time winner of the Antler River Poetry Contest. After a lifetime of working in social services, he is now retired and enjoying his ninth-floor writing retreat.

Carrie Lee Connel (she/her) lives in Southwestern Ontario as a Treaty Land inhabitant, with her husband, Andreas Gripp. She is an alumna of Western University with an MLIS and a BA in English Language & Literature. Her poems have been included in the anthologies *Stones Beneath the Surface*, *Moon Shine: A Canadian Poetry Collection*, *Another London*, *Piping at the End of Days*, and *Smitten: This is What*

Love Looks Like. Carrie has published three books of poetry, including *Written In Situ* (Harmonia Press, 2020) and a published volume of her short fiction, *The Bogified Manuscript: weird and ghostly stories* (Beliveau Books, 2021).

James Deahl was born in Pittsburgh in 1945; he moved to Canada in 1970, and is the author or editor of over thirty-five books, his five most recent titles being: *Releasing The Wisdom Of Stone; To Possess The Land: An Anthology Of Confederation Poetry; Four-Square Poems; Awareness;* and *The Confederation Poets: The Founding Of A Canadian Poetry, 1880 To The First World War.* He is the editor of *Tamaracks: Canadian poetry for the 21 st century; In A Springtime Instant: The Selected Poems of Milton Acorn, 1950 – 1986;* and *Adder's-tongues: A Choice of Norma West Linder's Poems, 1969 – 2011.* A cycle of his poems is the focus of the American television documentary, *Under the Watchful Eye.* Deahl is the father of three daughters, Sarah, Simone, and Shona, and the grandfather of Scot and Felix. He lives in Sarnia, Ontario.

Emily De Angelis is a poet and writer of fiction. She has poems published in various anthologies and journals. Her poetry chapbook, *In the Space Between: The 'New Woman' in the Writing of Florence Carlyle*, was released in 2024 (Woodstock Art Gallery). De Angelis' award winning, crossover YA novel, *The Stones of Burren Bay*, was also released in 2024 with Latitude 46 Publishing. Her second crossover YA novel, *For the Sake of Mercy,* will be published in

2027 by DarkWinter Press. She lives in Woodstock, Ontario with her husband Michael.

Roméo Desmarais III is a queer, Muskrat Métis *des Plats du Lac Ste-Claire.* t/he/y are a published page poet and spoken word performer, as well as a singer-song-writer and multimodal artist. Roméo is the former Director of The Apposite Poetry Performance Monthly Series in London. t/he/y are currently living in Tkaronto (Toronto) on Turtle Island.

Jennifer Frankum is Owen Sound Poet Laureate for 2026-2027. She has three poetry collections in print and a picture book for toddlers, all with The Brucedale Press. She has won some awards for her writing. Jennifer lives in Bruce County where she writes every morning in solitude, then puts on her armour and steps out into the world.

Roy Geiger has reviewed fiction and poetry in numerous publications and volunteered on the board of several long-standing reading series. His poems, short fiction and non-fiction have been anthologized and published in *Grain, The Antigonish Review, The /tƐmz/ Review, The Ekphrastic Review*, *long con magazine*, and *Aethlon*.

Katherine L. Gordon is a rural Ontario poet, publisher, contest adjudicator, editor, and reviewer, working to promote Canadian poetry around the world. She has many books, chapbooks, anthologies and collaborations with fine

contemporaries whose work inspires her. Her poems have been translated and awarded internationally. Among her latest books is *After Midnight,* published by Sureway Press.

Mary Anne Griffiths (she/her) is an aroace poet and fiction writer living in Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada. Her work can be found in *Queen's Quarterly, Dark Winter Lit Magazine, RockPaperPoem, Anti-Heroin Chic,* and other publications. At the present time she is working towards her first poetry/micro fiction collection.

Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in November of 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of 46 books of poetry, including *Hymns of New Jerusalem, Obliviance,* and the forthcoming volume, *La Grande Finale* (September, 2026). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling—grounded in the contemporary experiences of both common and uncommon people. Website: andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp

Gregory Wm. Gunn was born in 1960 in Windsor, Ontario. His formative years were spent in a few small towns before settling in London, Ontario in 1970. Involved in various visual arts from a young age, then directing his attention to music and writing during his scholastic stretch at Fanshawe College in the early '80s, he has been striving meticulously, refining his skills in both those disciplines ever since. He has

been widely published in diverse literary journals including *The Toronto Quarterly, Side-B Magazine, Inscribed Magazine, Burning, 20 X 20 Magazine, Crack the Spine, Covalence, Blue Lake Review, The Light Ekphrastic,* and many others. He is currently compiling his 13th volume of poems.

Currently making work for the stage and screen because what the hell is going on, **Kevin Andrew Heslop** (Summer 1992, Canada's London®) is an ongoing polydisciplinary event abroad whose recent work includes a non-fiction debut, *The Writing on the Wind's Wall: Dialogues About 'Medical Assistance in Dying'* (Spring 2026, Guernica Editions), a forthcoming poetry chapbook, *it looks like a garden but he had hurt himself by accident* (Fall 2026, Cactus Press), a forthcoming sophomore collection of poems, *here lies the refugee breather who drank a bowl of elsewhere* (Spring 2027, Biblioasis), and two forthcoming volumes of *Craft, Consciousness: Dialogues About the Arts* (Springs 2027 & 2028, Guernica Editions). Nothing on his wall is framed. He has no dog.

Penn Kemp is a poet, playwright, and performer who lives in London. Kemp has been publishing since 1962 and was London's first poet laureate, serving from 2010 to 2013. Her most recent collection is *Colour Fieldin*g (Silver Bow Publishing, 2026). The League of Canadian Poets honored her with their Inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award, 2025-26. Website: pennkemp.weebly.com

John B. Lee is the author of nearly one hundred books and is the editor of nearly a dozen anthologies. Among his most recent titles is *A Wet Seed Wild in the Hot Blind Earth* (Aeolus House). Appointed Poet Laureate of the City of Brantford in perpetuity, he is also Poet Laureate of Norfolk County for life, and was Poet Laureate of the Canada Cuba Literary Alliance (2020-2022). Called "the greatest living poet in English" by author George Whipple, he is a recipient of well over one hundred prestigious national and international awards for his writing. He lives with his wife Cathy in a lake house overlooking Long Point Bay on Lake Erie in the town of Port Dover.

Nathaniel Luscombe is an author from Ontario, Canada. He has written a few cozy sci-fi works, including *Moon Soul* and *Human Scars on Planet Skin*, as well as a pair of poetry collections. He co-runs Dragon Bone Publishing and Dragon Heart Press.

Kathryn MacDonald's poetry has been published in Canadian and international literary journals and anthologies. She is the author of *The Blue Gate* (Frontenac House, April 2026), *Wayside: a small boat, a vacant lot, a man* (BPR Press, Winter 2026), *Liminal Spaces*, a collaborative chapbook (Glentula Press, 2025), *Far Side of the Shadow Moon* (Glentula Press, 2024), *A Breeze You Whisper* : *Poems* (HBP, 2010) and *Calla & Édourd* (fiction, HBP, 2009). For more information: https://kathrynmacdonald.com

A graduate of Queen's University Artist In The Community Education Program, **Rhonda Melanson** has been published in several print and online magazines and is the 2024 recipient of The Ted Plantos Memorial Award in Ontario, Canada. She is the author of two chapbooks: *Gracenotes* (Beret Days Press) and *My Name is Mary* (Alien Buddha Press). She also co-edits a literary blog, *Uproar.*

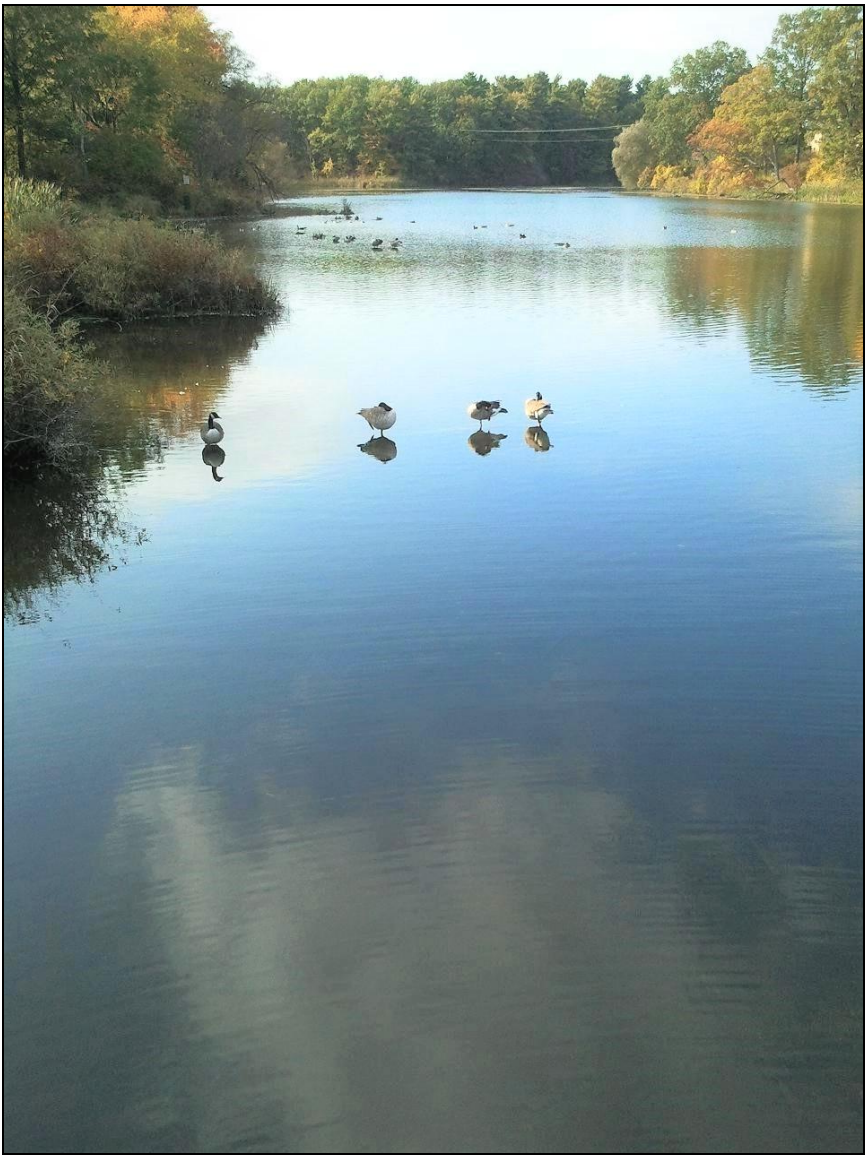
Richard-Yves Sitoski lives in Owen Sound on the lands of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (treaty territory 45 ½). He was the 2019-2023 Poet Laureate of Owen Sound. His work has appeared throughout Canada, including in *The Antigonish Review*, *Arc*, and *The Fiddlehead*. His works include the chapbook *How to Be Human* and the full-length collection *Wait, What?*. His most recent collection, *A Current Through the Flesh,* is available from Ronsdale Press. He was the Artistic Director of the 2023 Words Aloud poetry festival and works as the Marketing and Publication Coordinator for Kegedonce Press.

Susanna Suchak or Carries Words, has been writing for 60+ years, mostly in her professional life, but as a private practitioner, under "Leafology", she facilitates writing-for-wellness workshops around Southwestern Ontario. When dinosaurs roamed the earth, she attended the University of Windsor, where she studied with Joyce Carol Oates, Alistair MacLeod, spent a day in a seminar with Margaret Atwood, spent a delightful evening in the grotto with Earl Birney, got produced in the annual poetry review, and generally just fell

in love with the music and power of words strung together like beads on a two-row wampum belt. During her Master's study at Athabasca, she developed a "writing-for-wellness" modality, "Wordscapes"—a process to remember we are "the landscape, not the weather." Her Capstone thesis was an autoethnographic exploration focused on integrating and transforming trauma through the expressive arts.

John Tyndall, first-place winner of the 2022 Don Gutteridge Poetry Award, lives in London, Ontario with an Angora tuxedo cat named Buddy. His latest books are *Mangoes from the Seventh Dimension* (Wet Ink Books, 2023) and *Listen to People* (Hidden Brook Press, 2020).

Jennifer Wenn is a trans-identified writer and speaker from London, Ontario. Her first poetry chapbook, *A Song of Milestones*, was published by Harmonia Press (an imprint of Beliveau Books). Her first full-size collection, *Hear Through the Silence*, was published by Cyberwit in early 2023. Her second collection, *Emergence,* was published in the Spring of 2025 by Wet Ink Books. She has also written *From Adversity to Accomplishment* (a family and social history), published poetry in numerous journals and anthologies, and is the proud parent of two adult children. Visit her at jenniferwennpoet.wixsite.com/home



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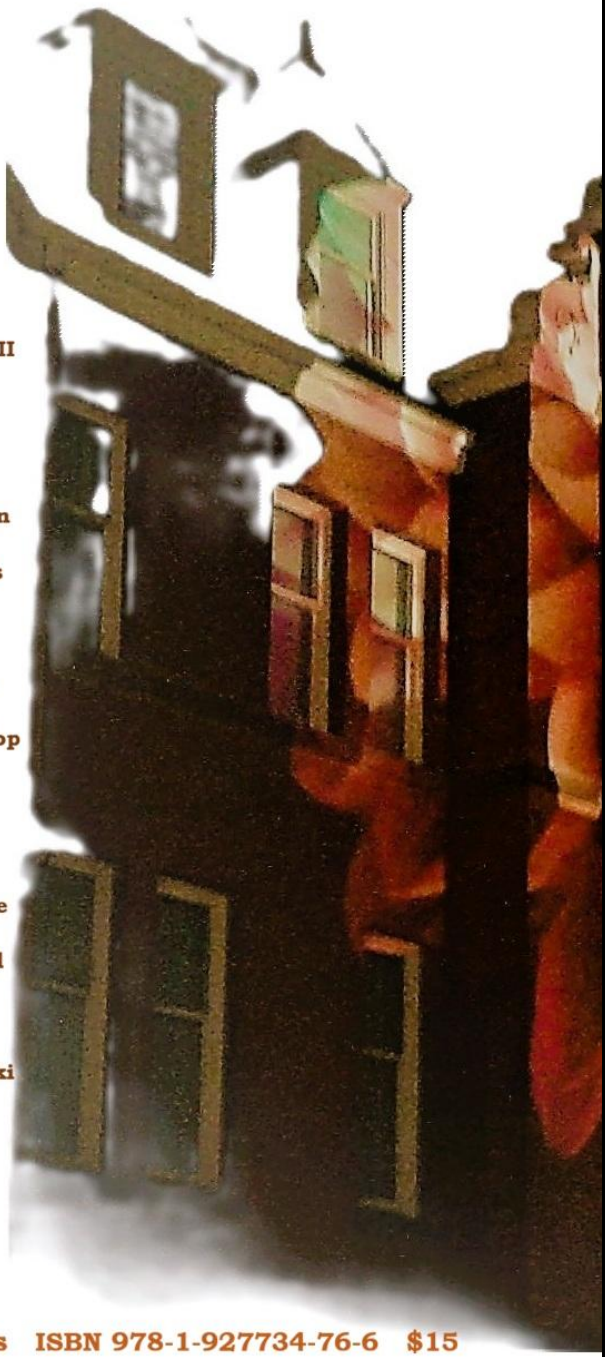

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